# Islamic Manners

Shaykh ‘Abdul Fattah Abu Ghuddah

*“I wrote this book because I have seen many of my beloved brothers and sisters disregard these etiquettes and misinterpret them. In compiling this, I hope to remind them of these manners. I do not claim to be better or less in need of practicing these manners; but, it is the duty of enjoining good and forbidding evil and observing the order of Allah 'And remind because a reminder is beneficial to the believers.' “*

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PREFACE

The best of praise and glory be to Allah the lord of the universe, and the best of prayers and peace be on his Messenger Muhammad, his kin, his companions, and his pious followers who follow his guidance and etiquette. O Allah guide us to follow them in words and actions until we die.

This is a brief book on 'The Manners of Islam' in which I collected selected texts on the manners of Islam. The Hadiths cited in this book are either authentic (Sahih) or good (Hasan).

I wrote this book because I have seen many of my beloved brothers and sisters disregard these etiquettes and misinterpret them. In compiling this, I hope to remind them of these manners. I do not claim to be better or less in need of practicing these manners; but, it is the duty of enjoining good and forbidding evil and observing the order of Allah 'And remind because a reminder is beneficial to the believers.'

May Allah enable all of us to benefit from good reminders and make this of benefit to myself and my readers. May Allah protect and guide us in this life and in the hereafter.

Riyadh, 1 Muharam, 1412

**‘Abdul Fattah Abu Ghuddah**

# INTRODUCTION

The religion of Islam has rules of etiquette and a moral code involving every aspect of life. These are applicable for the whole society; the elderly, the young, men and women. We must not forget that the Prophet ((PBUH)) said, 'Women are the counterpart of men.' Hence, what is required of men, in adhering to Islamic manners, is required of women; for together they form the Muslim society and through them Islam is introduced and identified.

These manners cover even the slightest acts, such as entering, or exiting a washroom, the posture of sitting, and cleaning one’s self. At the time of the Prophet, one of the polytheists mockingly said to his companion Salman Al-Farisi: 'Your prophet has taught you everything, even the manners of going to the toilet.' Salman answered, 'Yes, the Prophet forbade us from facing the Qibla when urinating or getting rid of body waste.' Salman continued, 'the Prophet asked us not to use the right hand when cleaning ourselves and to use at least three stones for cleaning.

# IMPORTANCE OF APPEARANCE

### *1.1 Distinct Muslim Personality*

Islam advocates this etiquette and stresses it so as to perfect the Muslim personality and to bring about harmony among people. There is no doubt that embodying such manners and virtues enhances personal style and qualities, refines personality and brings us closer to the hearts and minds of others. The forthcoming manners and etiquette are central to Islam, its purposes and its aims. Calling it 'etiquette' by no means implies that it is marginal to life and social behaviour. It does not mean Muslims have the option of ignoring this code of behaviour, or that it is merely preferable to adhere to it.

In pointing out that manners rank higher than deeds, Imam Al-Qarãfi in his book Al-Furwüq said, 'Learn that a little etiquette is better than a lot of good actions.' Rwúaim, the righteous scholar, told his son, 'Oh my son, make your deeds salt, and your manners flour.' Many good manners with few good deeds are better than many good
deeds with few good manners. Even if some of these rules appear to be simple common courtesy, it is important to highlight their significance. Many Muslims commit errors which blemish the Islamic personality, whose purpose is meant to be unique in its beauty, perfection and traits. Our master, the Messenger of Allah ((PBUH)) directed the blessed companions by saying: 'You are on your way to meet your brothers, put on a nice dress and fix your riding so you appear distinct among people as a fleck [on a beautiful face]. Allah does not like roughness nor rough manners.'

When the Prophet, peace be upon him, said: 'No one will enter Paradise if they have at heart a grain of arrogance.' A man asked: 'A
man may like his dress to be nice and his shoes nice' The Prophet answered 'Allah is beautiful and likes beauty. Arrogance is to deny rights and look down at people.'

Shaikh Ibn Taimia said that the beauty that Allah likes include nice clothes. Hence it could be said that Allah likes all nice things. Therefore, a Muslim ought to be recognized by neat dress, cleanliness and graceful appearance.

### *1.2 CLEANLINESS AND WASHING*

The Sunna is to keep perfume and to use it regularly on oneself. Al-Bukhari narrated that Salman Al-Farsi said: the Prophet, peace be upon him, said 'Allah will forgive the sins of the past week for he who on Friday will take a bath, cleanse himself, put on his [regular] perfume or any perfume available in house. Then, he goes out [to Jumu'ah prayer] and does not try to separate two friends. Then he prays wherever he could and listens to the Imam.' If the body became odorous a day or two before Friday, one should not wait till Friday to cleanse the body. We should wash our bodies as soon as it require washing to keep ourselves clean and fresh.

To take a bath on Friday is specifically required since a large number of people will be gathering at mosques. However, if our body became dirty or we sweat on a particular day,

then, we should take a bath at the end of day or the next morning. This is indicated by a Hadith narrated by Al-Bukhari and Muslim that Abu Huraira said, the Prophet, peace be upon him, said: 'It is the duty of every Muslim to have a bath once every week to wash his head and body.' Another Hadith

### *1.3 ARRIVING FROM A JOURNEY*

If you are traveling to visit someone or if you are about to receive guests, whether those in question are your parents, relatives, peers, or friends of a different age, make sure that your hands, feet, and socks are clean, and your appearance and clothing is neat. Never neglect or underestimate the importance of your look, for that would certainly mar the pleasure of the meeting, while dulling the enjoyment of those you meet. In this regard, the Prophet directed his companions upon returning from a journey: 'You are returning to your brethren, dress nicely, and sort out your rides so that you may become a beauty mark among people, for Allah does not like sloppiness or acting in a sloppy way.'

Try to bring some gifts to those receiving you, and likewise present your guests with a present. Always be prepared to reciprocate with a suitable gift. The subtle joy of seeing your beloved ones will be vividly remembered for many years. A gift, however symbolic, will greatly enhance the pleasure of such a meeting. The Prophet (PBUH), as reported by Bukhary, said: 'Exchange gifts; exchange love.' Our Muslim predecessors used to leave their host with a present which could be as symbolic as an Arak stick.

### *1.4 DRESS PROPERLY WITH FAMILY AND FRIENDS*

Dress properly, even among friends and relatives. Dress properly when visiting your parents, a pious person, an elder, or even a relative or a friend. Your attire should be clean and elegant, not ugly or unsightly. We are attracted or repulsed by what we see. If you look good in clean clothes, smelling nice, you will be pleasant to look at and people will be attracted to you and enjoy your presence. If you were the opposite, people will look down on you even if you were a relative or friend. To look good while visiting or being visited is an instinctive trait in addition to being an Islamic manner. Do not ignore this aspect because you consider yourself to be close to your hosts or guests.

Imam Bukhari in his book, 'Al-Adab Al-Mufrad' reported that the great follower Abi Al-’Alia Al-Riahi Al-Basri said, 'Muslims were at their best when visiting each other.' Al-Hafez Al-Haithami in 'Majma Al-Zawaed' (1:169) reported that Thabet Al-Banani, the student of Imam Anas bin Malik said, 'When I used to visit Anas, he would call for a perfume and run it along his cheeks.' Accordingly, if you were visited at home while dressed very casually, as it sometimes happens, you should change for your visitor. This will enhance his respect for you and will complement your hospitality. It is, after all, the manners of the early Muslims.

# ENTERING OR LEAVING A HOUSE

### *2.1 HOW TO ENTER*

Enter or leave your house with your right foot first, as it was the tradition of the Prophet. Imaam Abul Ala Hasan ibn Ahmad al-Hamazani, a great scholar of Hadith of his time, was so keen on applying this Sunnah to the extent that if someone entered his house with their left foot first, he would ask them to go out and re-enter with their right foot first. He was so much respected that the Sultan of the day would visit him at school and sit in front of him as a student. At one occasion, he told the Sultan to exit with his right foot first and walk on the right side of the road.

When entering or leaving a house, do not push the door violently, or slam it shut, or leave it to close by itself wildly. Such actions stand in contrast to the gracefulness of Islam to which you are honoured to belong. Close the door quietly with your hand. You may have heard a Hadith reported by Imam Muslim whereby 'Aisha (RA) quotes the Prophet: 'Gentleness adorns every act. Its absence will tarnish it.'

### *2.2 ENTERING WHILE OTHERS ARE ASLEEP*

If you enter a place where people are sleeping, whether during day or night, be quiet and gentle. Be considerate. Do not cause any undue noise when entering or exiting. You have heard the saying of the Prophet (PBUH): 'Whoever is deprived of gentleness, is deprived of all sorts of goodness.' Muslim and Al-Tirmidhi reported that the honourable companion Al-Miqdad bin Al-Aswad (RA) said: 'We used to preserve the Prophet's share of the milk, when he came back at night he would greet us with a voice loud enough for those awake to hear, without disturbing those who were asleep.' In addition, whenever the Prophet used to pray at night, he would recite the Quran with a voice that pleased those that were awake, without disturbing those that were asleep.'

Princess Qatrul Nada (Dew point) was famous for her intelligence, manners and beauty. She was the daughter of Khimarwaih bin Ahmad bin Toulon, the King of Egypt. She married Al-Mu'taded Billah. Qatrul Nada said: 'My father taught me an important manner - do not sleep among sitting people and do not sit among sleeping people.'

### *2.3 GREETING*

When entering or leaving your house, acknowledge those inside. Use the greeting of Muslims and the label of Islam: 'Assalam 'Alãikum wa Rahmatullahi wa Barakãtuh; Peace and mercy of Allah be with you.' Do not forego this Islamic greeting by replacing it with something else, such as 'Good Morning,' or 'Hello.' This greeting is the sign of Islam and the phrase that the Messenger of Allah ((PBUH)) recommended and practiced. The greeting of Muslims and Islam is: Assalam Alaikum wa Rahmatullahi wa Barakatuh. Peace, mercy, and blessing of Allah be upon you. The Prophet, peace be upon him, taught his faithful servant Anas bin Malik to greet his family when entering or leaving his house. Imam Al Tirmizi

reported that Anas said: 'The Messenger of Allah said to me, 'My son, greet your family when you enter [your home], for that is a blessing for you and your family.''

Qatada, a prominent follower (Tabi'y), said: 'Greet your family when you enter your house. They are the most worthy of your greeting.' Al- Tirmidhi reported another Hadith whereby Abu Huraira (RA) stated that the Messenger of Allah ((PBUH)) said: 'If you join a gathering, greet them, and if you want to leave, dismiss yourself. The first is no less important than the second.'

Imam Al-Suyuti in his book 'Praising the Abyssinians' cited from Abo Taleb Al-Jumahi's Al-Tahyat the following: 'Every nation has a way of greeting. Arabs will say salams. Persians Emperors require prostrating and kissing the floor. The Persians touch their hand on the floor in front of the king. The Abyssinians quietly, gather their hands at their chest. The Romans uncover their head and bow. The Nubians would gesture as if kissing the guest and then putting both hands on their face.' All these greetings, except Salam, are forbidden.

Imam Nawawi in Al-Majmu said 'It is preferred to say 'Bismillahi Arrahman Arrahim' when you enter your house or others' houses. You ought to say Salam if you enter it regardless whether it was empty or occupied. You say a prayer when you go out. Tirmizi and Abu Dawood narrated a Hadith by Anas that the Prophet said: 'If you say in the name of Allah, I seek help from Allah, no strength or means but with Allah. Then he will be told: you are protected and saved. The Satan will leave him.

He cited another Hadith narrated by Muslim that Jaber bin Abdullah related that he heard the Prophet, peace be upon him, saying: 'If you enter your house and pray to Allah when entering and before your meals, the Satan will say [to his group]: No sleep and no food. If you entered it without praying to Allah. Satan will say [to his group]: You secured your sleep and dinner.'

### *2.4 ANNOUNCING YOUR PRESENCE*

When entering a house, make your presence known to those inside before you approach them. Avoid startling or frightening them. Do not descend upon them suddenly. Abu 'Ubãida 'Àmer bin 'Abdullah bin Mas'wüd (RA) said: 'My father 'Abdullah ibn Mas'wüd used to announce his arrival by addressing his family in a cordial tone.

Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal said: 'When a person enters his house, it is recommended that he/she creates noise by coughing or tapping his/her shoes.' His son Abdullah said: 'When returning home from the mosque, my father used to announce his arrival before entering, by tapping with his shoes or coughing.'

Bukhari and Muslim reported that the Prophet denounced those who unexpectedly surprise their families at night, whether returning from travel or otherwise, because it makes them appear to be distrustful.

### 2.5 SEEKING PERMISSION TO ENTER

If family members are resting in their rooms, and you want to join them, it is appropriate to ask for permission and/or knock on the door. Otherwise, you may see them in a condition that you, or they for that matter, may not like. This applies to your entire household; your immediate family or otherwise. In the Muwata by 'Ata ibn Yasãr,
Imam Malik narrated that a man asked the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) the following: 'Should I seek permission to enter my mother's room?' The Prophet answered, 'Yes.' The man said, 'We live together in the same house.' The Messenger of Allah (PBUH) said, 'Ask for permission to join her.' The man argued, 'But, I am her servant.' The Prophet said, 'Ask for permission. Would you like to see her naked?' The man replied, 'No!' The Prophet said, 'Then ask permission when entering.'

A man asked 'Abdullah bin Mas'wüd: 'Should I ask permission to enter my mother's room?' He answered him, 'Yes. There are certain circumstances in which you would rather not see her. ' Zaynab, the wife of 'Abdullah ibn Mas'wüd said that upon reaching the door, 'Abdullah used to make noise, fearing that he might surprise us and encounter an embarrassing situation. A man asked Huzaifa ibn Al-Yamãn, 'Should I ask permission to enter my mother's?' Huzaifa replied, 'Yes, if you do not ask for her permission, you may encounter an embarrassing situation.'

Müsa the son of the companion Talha ibn 'Obaidillah said: 'My father went to my mother's room. I followed him as he entered, he turned toward me and pushed me down forcing me to sit. Then he reprimanded me: 'How dare you to enter without permission?'

Nafi,' the patron of 'Abdullah bin Omar said: 'When any of Ibn Omar's children come of age, Ibn Omar would assign him/her another room. He would not allow any of them to enter his room without permission.'

'Ata bin Abi Rabãh asked Ibn 'Abbas: 'Should I seek permission when calling on my two sisters?' Ibn Abbas answered, 'Yes.' I said: 'I am their guardian, supporter and provider of their needs.' He said, 'Would you rather see them naked?' Then he read the Quranic verse, 'And when the children among you come of age, let them ask for permission, as do those senior to them in age; thus does Allah make clear His signs. Allah is full of knowledge and wisdom.' Thus, Ibn 'Abbas concluded that asking permission is obligatory for all people. Ibn Mas'wüd said: 'A person should seek permission whenever entering the room of a father, mother, brother and sister.' Jãber also said: 'A person should seek permission whenever entering the room of a son, a daughter, a mother -even if she is old, a brother, a sister, or a father.'

### 2.6 KNOCKING AND RINGING

Knock at the door, or ring the door's bell in a pleasant way and not louder than is necessary to make your presence known. Do not knock loudly and violently or ring the bell continuously. Remember that you are a visitor and not a thug or an oppressor who is raiding the house and frightening its occupants. A woman came to Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal seeking his opinion on a religious matter. She banged at his door loudly. He came out saying, 'This is

the banging of policemen.' Al-Bukhari reported in Al-Adab Al-Mufrad that the companions of the Prophet (PBUH) used to knock on the door of the Prophet with the tips of their nails.

This nimble and gentle knocking, or ringing, is appropriate for those whose living quarters are close to the door. For those living farther from the door, it is appropriate to knock on their door, or ring the bell loud enough to enable them to hear it, without banging. In this regard the Prophet (PBUH) said, 'Gentleness adorns every act, its absence will tarnish it.' In addition, Muslim reported that the Prophet also said, 'Whoever lacks kindness, lacks all good things.'

Leave an adequate time between two knocks, or rings. This will enable those performing ablution, praying, or eating, to finish without rushing. Some scholars estimate this interval to be that of the praying time of four rak'as. Keep in mind that a person may have just started the prayers just before you rang the door bell.

After three spaced knocks, or intermittent rings, you may feel that the person you came to see is busy, otherwise, he or she would have answered you. If this is the case, leave. Al-Bukhari and Muslim reported that the Prophet (PBUH) said: 'If you asked permission three times, and were not granted permission, then you must leave.'

While waiting for permission, do not stand in front of the door. Instead, stand to the right or to the left. The Messenger of Allah (PBUH), upon coming to someone's door, avoided facing the door directly. Instead, he would stand to the right or to the left of the door.

### *2.7 ANSWERING 'WHO IS IT'*

If you knock on the door you may be asked, 'Who is it?' Identify yourself , using your most common name but do not respond with, 'It is me,' 'Somebody,' or, 'Guess who?' These words are useless in identifying who is at the door. You should not assume that your voice is known to the person or persons who live there, because your voice may resemble another person's voice. Don't forget that people differ in their ability to distinguish voices.

The Prophet (PBUH) discouraged people from saying 'it's me' because it does not reveal your name. Bukhari and Muslim reported that Jabir bin 'Abdullah said: 'I came to the Prophet (PBUH) and knocked on his door, and he asked, 'Who is it?' I answered, 'It is me,' and the Prophet (PBUH) disapprovingly said, ' Me is me, me is me!' ' For this reason, the companions used to mention their names whenever they were asked, 'Who is it?'

Bukhari and Muslim reported that Abu Zar said: 'While walking out one night I saw the Messenger of Allah walking by himself. I opted to walk in the shade of the moon, but he turned around and saw me and said, 'Who is there?' I replied, 'It's Abu Zar.' ' Bukhari and Muslim also reported that Umm Hani, a cousin of the Prophet (PBUH), and the sister of 'Ali bin Abi Talib, said: 'I came to see the Prophet (PBUH). He was taking a bath and his daughter Fatima was sheltering him, and he asked 'who is this?' I replied, 'I am Umm Hani.' '

# THE MANNERS OF VISITING

### *3.1 KEEPING APPOINTMENTS, DELAYS AND CANCELLATION*

In the first verse of Surat Al-Mai'da, Allah called upon the believers 'O' you the Believers, fulfill your promises.' In Surat Maryam Allah also praised Prophet Ismail may peace be upon him 'He was true to his promise. He was a Messenger and a Prophet.'

To keep an appointment is vital to our lives, since time is the most precious commodity, once wasted it could not be replaced. If you made an appointment, whether to a friend, colleague or for business you should do your utmost to keep this appointment. This is the right of the other person who gave you part of their time and may have declined other appointments. Not only have you disrupted their schedule but you have marred your image and personality. If your punctuality becomes lousy you will lose people's respect. You should keep all your appointments whether it was with an important person,a close friend or someone else. You will be responding to the call of Allah in Surat Al-Issra' 'and keep your promises. The promise is a responsibility.'

It is enough to know that our kind Prophet gave an appointment to one of his companions. The companion came three days later. The Prophet gently reprimanded him 'You have caused me some trouble. I have been waiting expecting you since three days.' The companion probably had an excuse for this delay. Then, he had no means to inform the Prophet about his inability to meet the appointment.

Today, fast and reliable communication means are available everywhere. As soon as you realize you will not be able to keep an appointment, you should inform the other parties to enable them to utilize their time. Do not be careless or irresponsible. Do not think that the appointment is so unimportant that it does not merit a notice or an apology. This is totally irrelevant. Regardless of its importance an appointment is a commitment. It must be kept or canceled properly in advance.

Never make a promise while you do not intend to keep it or fulfill it. This is forbidden as it falls within lying and hypocrisy. Al-Bukhari and Muslim narrated that the Prophet said: 'Three traits single out hypocrites, even if he prayed and/or fast and claimed to be Muslim: If he talks, he lies. If he promises, he does not keep it. If he is entrusted, he betrays the trust.'

Imam Ghazali in Al-Ihya said that this Hadith fits those who promise while intending not to fulfill it, or those who, without excuse, decide later not to fulfill a promise. Those who promise but could not fulfill, their promise due to a proper excuse are not hypocrites. But we should be careful not to create excuses that are not valid. Allah knows our inner thoughts and intentions.

### *3.2 DECLINING A VISIT*

If you visit friends with or without an appointment and they apologize for not being able to receive you, accept their apology without ill-feeling. You should understand that something may have come up compelling them to decline your visit. Their own affairs, or the state of their house, may have made your visit inconvenient. It is perfectly all right for them to ask to be excused.

The follower (Tabi'ee) Qatada bin Di'ama Al-Sadüsy said: 'Do not hang around at the door of those who declined your visit. Accept their reason, leave to attend your business, and let them attend their own business.' Do not ask for reason or explanations. Imam Malik used to say: 'Not all people can disclose their reasons.' Accordingly, when it comes to visiting, our righteous ancestors used to say to their hosts: 'Perhaps you just became busy and cannot receive us,' making them feel at ease in case they wanted to be excused. Imam Al-Tabari in his Tafseer (18:113) reported that a man of Muhajirin said: 'All my life, I wanted to practice this Sura 'If you are told to turn back then do so, it is much better for you' but I could not. I was hoping I will seek permission to visit a brother and he will tell me: Go back! I gladly will go back fulfilling this directive to Allah.

This particular etiquette is very important in order to remove any ill-feelings that could linger because of declining of a visit. Allah SWT said, 'If you are asked to go back, go back: that makes for greater purity.'4 Many people do not know what to do, and become disturbed by the visit of someone whom they do not want to receive under the circumstances, and may resort to lying. Not only their children learn these bad manners, but such behaviour may lead to antipathy.

The Quranic etiquette provides a better alternative to such unpleasantness and guards us against lying. It provides for the host to kindly present a reason to visitors and asks that they accept it in good faith and without hesitation: 'If you are asked to go back, go back: that makes for greater purity.'

### *3.3 CONTROL YOUR EYES*

When asking permission to enter a home, avoid glancing unnecessarily at its interior or beyond the guests' quarters. This is shameful and harmful. Abu Dawood and Tabarani explained that Sa'd bin 'Ubada (RA) said: 'A man came and stood at the door of the Prophet (PBUH) asking permission while facing the door. The Prophet (PBUH) said, 'Turn this way,' turning him away and ordering him to move farther from the door, saying, 'Asking permission is prescribed to prevent intrusion.' '

Bukhari also explained in Al-Adab Al-Mufrad that Thawban (RA) recounted that the Prophet (PBUH) said: 'A person should not look inside a house before getting permission, if you do [look inside before asking permission] , you have already entered [or trespassed].' Al-Bukhari also stated in Al-Adab Al-Mufrad and Abu Dawood and Al-Tirmidhi narrated by Abu Huraira who said that the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) said: 'If the sight leaps, permission should be denied.' Also, Al-Bukhari narrated that 'Ammar bin Sa'id Al-Tujiby stated that

Omar bin Al-Khatab said: 'Whoever fills his eyes with the sight of the interior of a house before being permitted is a wrong doer.'

Al-Bukhari, Muslim and others narrated that Sahl bin Sa'd (RA) said that a man peeked through a hole into the room of the Prophet (PBUH) while he was scratching his head with a small pitch fork. When The Prophet saw the intruder, he told him: 'Had I known you were looking I would have poked your eye! Asking permission is prescribed to prevent intrusion.'

### *3.4 REMOVING YOUR SHOES*

When entering the house of your host, or even your home, be gentle as you enter or leave. Lower your eyes and your voice. As a rule, you should take off your shoes unless your host asks you to keep them on. Take off your shoes at an appropriate spot, and set them in an orderly fashion. Do not forget the manner in which you put the shoes on and take them off: you put on the right shoe first and you take off the left shoe first. It was noted by Muslim and others that the Prophet (PBUH) said: 'When you put your shoes on, start with the right shoe. When taking your shoes off start with the left one. The right shoe is the first to be put on and the last to be taken off.'

Before entering your house or that of your brethren, inspect your shoes. If they are dirty, remove them or wipe the shoes against the ground. Islam is the religion of cleanliness and courtesy.

### *3.5 CHOOSING A SEAT*

Sit where asked to by your host. Do not argue with your hosts about the place where they wish you to sit. If you sit where you want, you may overlook a private area of the house, or you may cause inconvenience to the house residents. Ibn Kathir narrated in Al-Bidayah wa Al-Nihayah that the honoured companion ‘Adi bin Hatam Al-Tay converted to Islam and came to Madina to see the Prophet (PBUH). The Prophet honoured Hatam by seating him on a cushion, while he himself sat on the floor. ‘Adi said: '...then the Prophet took me along and upon reaching his house, he took a leather cushion filled with palm fiber and threw it on the floor. ‘Sit on this,' he said. ‘No, you sit on it,' I answered. The Prophet insisted, ‘No you.' So I sat on it while the Prophet sat on the floor.' '

Kharija bin Ziada visited Ibn Sireen. He found Ibn Sireen sitting on a cushion on the floor and wanted to also sit on a cushion, saying, 'I am content as you are.' Ibn Sireen replied: 'In my home, I will not be content until I provide you with what I am usually comfortable with. Sit where you are asked to sit.' Do not sit in the patron's seat unless he invites you to it.

In this regard, the Prophet (PBUH) said: 'No person shall lead another in prayer while the first is at the latter's house. No person shall sit, uninvited, at the favourite seat of the patron of the house.'

If it happened that you arrived early and your host, out of kindness, directed you to sit at the most prominent seat, be prepared to stand up and give this seat to the elder, the

notable, or the scholar when they arrive after you since they are more deserving of this seat.

Do not be insensitive and tactless. If you refuse to give your seat to those who are considered more deserving of it by those around you, this will only indicate your lack of manners and common sense. You will become one of those referred to by the Prophet, when he said, 'Those who do not respect our elders do not belong to us.'

To remain entrenched in your seat will not elevate your status, and it will certainly surprise those present. You will be considered a snob since you are insisting upon an undeserved honour. This rule applies equally to men and women. Insensibility does not enhance social standing. On the contrary, it will be a terrible mistake that will only tarnish your reputation. To honour an honourable person can only improve your standing and stir admiration for your manners and humbleness.

If you happened to sit in the second best place and a notable person entered the room, you should give up your seat to that person. To be respectful of our elders is evidence of your good manners and social sense. Imam Muslim reported that the Prophet said, when organizing prayers, 'The wisest of you and the elders should stand next to me, then those below them, then those below them.'

In the gathering, a prominent person may call upon you to discuss a matter, or to answer a query, or to give you an advice. If you sat beside him or near him, it is desirable that you return to your previous seat once the matter is concluded unless that person or other notables insist that you remain at your new seat. This is provided that by doing so, the space does not become so tight as to cause discomfort to those already sitting there. Manners are based on common sense. They could be developed by socializing with prominent and tactful individuals. By observing how they act and behave, you will be able to enhance your common sense, good manners and graceful behaviour.

You could be called to a gathering where you are the youngest. In such cases, do not sit before you are invited to do so. Do not sit if you will be crowding out others, or forcing others to leave their seats for you. If you are invited to sit, do not proceed to the best place when there are others more deserving of it. Be prepared to give up your seat to such individual. Doing this on your own, before being requested to do so, will enhance admiration and respect for you.

### *3.6 A VISITOR IS NOT AN INSPECTOR*

When you enter a home, whether as a visitor or an overnight guest, do not closely examine its contents as an inspector would. Limit your observation to what you need to see. Do not open closed closets, or boxes. Do not inspect a wallet, a package, or a covered object. This is against Islamic manners and an impolite betrayal of the trust your host has accorded to you. Uphold these manners during your visit and seek to cultivate your host's love and respect, and may Allah bless and protect you.

Imam Muhasibi in Risalat Al-Mustershidin said: 'The duty of sight is to preclude forbidden sights and not to try to see what has been hidden or covered. Dawood Al-Ta'i said ‘I was told we will be accountable for our minor gazes as we are accountable for minor deeds.'

The Arabic poet Miskin Al-Darimi said:

'My neighbor should not worry if
his door is not closed.'

### *3.7 TIMING YOUR VISIT*

Choose an appropriate time for your visit. Do not visit at inconvenient times such as mealtime, or when people are sleeping, resting, or relaxing. The length of the visit should be in accord with how well you know the hosts, as well as their circumstances and conditions. Do not overstay your welcome by making your visit too long or burdensome.

Imam Al-Nawawi said in the book of Al-Azkar: 'It is strongly recommended for Muslims to visit the pious people, the brethren, the neighbours, friends and relatives, and to be generous, kind, and obliging to them. However, the extent of the visit varies according to the host'scircumstances. The visit ought to be conducted in a pleasant manner and at convenient times. There are numerous sayings and traditions in this regard.'

### *3.8 GREETING*

If you enter a room, greet everyone inside. If you want to shake hands with those present, start with the most eminent, the most knowledgeable, the most pious, the oldest or those who have similar Islamic distinctions. Do not overlook the most distinguished or most eminent and start with the first person on your right. If you cannot decide who is the most reputable, or if those present happen to be of comparable status, then start with the elderly, for they are easier to recognize.

Al-Bukhari explained that the Prophet said, 'The elder! The elder!' In another version he said, 'The elderly come first.' ‘Abu Yalla and Al-Tabarany in Al-Awsat reported that the Prophet (PBUH) said: 'Start with the elderly, or , he said, ‘with the notables.' '

### *3.9 SITTING BETWEEN TWO PERSONS*

If you enter a room do not sit between two persons. Instead, sit on their left or right side. Abu Dawood reported that the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) said: 'No one is to sit between two people without their permission.'

Sometimes two persons will be kind enough to favour you by making room for you to sit between them. Acknowledge this kind gesture by accepting their offer. Do not sit crossed-legged to crowd them out. A sage said: 'Two persons are considered immoderate: a person to whom you give advice and he arrogantly holds it in contempt against you, and a person who is favoured with a seat in a room and he sits crossed-legged.'

If you are seated between two people, do not eavesdrop and listen to what they say, lest their conversation be a confidential or private matter. Eavesdropping is a bad habit and a sin. Al-Bukhari reported that the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) said: 'Whoever listens to people's
conversation against their wishes, will be punished by liquid lead being poured down their ears on the day of Judgment.'

You should seek to benefit from the company and wisdom of the elders who are described as ' a fruit at the end of the season.' I would add, 'a sun wearing the veil' since it will leave us and disappear at night. Be keen to attend the gatherings of the elders whether scholars, pious persons, nobles, or relatives. Soon you may lament their departure and your loss.

It is an inappropriate Muslim manner to whisper to someone sitting next to you if you are in a group of three people. The third person will feel deserted and isolated and will think the worst of thoughts. The Messenger (PBUH) hated this. Imam Malik and Abu Dawood reported that he said: 'No two shall exchange whispers in the presence of a third person.' That the Prophet used 'No two...' in an assertive negative form, indicates that such a mistake is not only inappropriate but an unimaginable and instinctively despicable. ‘Abdullah Bin Omar was asked, 'What if they were four?' 'Then it does not matter,' he answered, meaning it is not irritating then to whisper or to mutter. If a friend entrusted you with a secret, do not betray him or her. Do not tell it even to your best friend or closest relative.

### *3.10 THE HOST'S DUTIES AND THE GUESTS' RIGHTS*

If you are having a guest overnight, be hospitable and generous. But do not exaggerate when providing food and drink to your guest. Moderation without excess is the Sunnah. You should try your best to make your guest's stay pleasant and comfortable during wake and sleep. Inform your guest of the direction of Qibla and show them the way to the bath.

Your guest will need to use towels after showers, ablution or washing hands before and after meals. Make sure that they are fresh and clean. Do not offer towels that you or your family members have used. It is also a nice idea to offer guests some perfume and a mirror. Make sure that the toiletries and bath accessories they will be using are clean and sanitized. Before leading your guest to the bathroom, inspect it and remove anything that you don't want your guest to see.

Your guests will need rest and a quiet sleep. Spare them the noise of the children and the house as much as possible. Remove intimate clothing from their view. If the guest is a man, remove all women's clothing and belongings. This is a desirable, decent practice that will leave you both feeling comfortable. When meeting your guests, serve them with tact and respect. Dress properly and look your best but do not overdo it. The close relationship between you is no excuse for negligence or indecency in your manner or look. Imam Bukhari in Al-Adab Al-Mufrad reported that our forefathers used to look their best when visiting each other. Be kind and generous to your guests. As a rule do not ask them to help you with house chores. Imam Shafie' said 'Gentlemen do not employ their visiting guests.'

If you visit a relative or a friend, you should be considerate of your host's circumstances and work commitments. Shorten, as much as possible, the length of your visit, since every person has various duties, obligations and responsibilities. Be considerate of your hosts and help them with their business , house chores and obligations. While at your hosts' house, do not inspect and examine every corner, especially when you are invited beyond the guest room, lest you see something you're not supposed to notice. In addition, do not bother your hosts by asking too many questions.

### *3.11 STAY IN TOUCH*

If you cannot visit your relatives, friends or acquaintances, you should still keep in touch by calling them or sending them a letter. This will leave them with a deep amicable impression, and will keep the relationship alive. Al-Fadhl ibn Marwan, the vizier if the Abbasid Khalifah al-Mu'tasim said, 'Inquiring about friends is [like] meeting them.'

In this regard, I would like to quote two poems:

If dear friends missed meeting each other
Then, the best meeting is a letter

I will be grateful every day
To a friend sending greetings while far away

### *3.11 A BRIEF ADVICE TO MY SISTERS*

A specific advice to my dear Muslim sisters: If you want to visit your relatives or your Muslim sisters, carefully select the day and the hour of your visit and its duration. There are appropriate and inappropriate times for paying visits even to relatives and friends.

Do your best to make the visit a nice, brief, and pleasant one. Avoid turning it into a boring, wearisome, inquisitive and lengthy visit. Instead, it should be a visit whose purpose is to rekindle and nourish an old friendship or kinship. The visit is desirable if it is short and considerate, and it is undesirable if it is long and tedious during which conversation moves from being purposeful and valuable to being aimless and useless. The honourable follower Mohammed ibn Shihab Al-Zuhri said: 'When a meeting becomes too long, Satan increasingly participates in it.'

Make sure that during a visit that most, if not all of your talk, is of value and benefit. Keep away form backbiting, gossip, and idle talk. Astute Muslim women do not have time for such nonsense

# THE MANNERS OF CONVERSATION

### *4.1 SELECTING SUITABLE TOPICS*

In Sura Al-Haj, Allah described the believers 'And they have been guided to the purest of speeches; and guided to the path of Him who is worthy of all praise.' When you talk during your visit, say only what fits the situation and be brief. If you are the youngest among those sitting, don't speak unless you are asked to, or unless you know that your speech and words will be well received and will please the host and other guests. Don't prolong your speech. Use a proper tone of voice. Anas reported that 'the Prophet's talk was clear and concise. Not too much nor too little. He disliked loquacity and ranting.' Bukhari narrated a Hadith in which Aisha said 'The Prophet's talk [was so little] that you can count his words'.

If you hear the Azan you must listen and respond to the call of Allah. Many people, even those with Islamic knowledge continue talking while the Azan is being called. This is rude, since those hearing the Azan should listen to it and quit speech, study and even Quran recitation. Solemnly they should repeat the words of the Azan and reflect on the words of this highest call. We should listen to the Azan, whether we are at home, office, shop, or attending a lesson, even if it is a religious lesson. Imam Al-Kasani in Badaiu Al-Sanaei' said: 'Those hearing the Azan or Iqama should not talk. Even if reading Quran or doing other noble things, everything should be stopped to listen and respond to the Azan'.

The Azan is the food of the soul nourishing it with faith and elevation. Do not forgo your share of it. Teach this to your children and friends. Al-Bukhari narrated a Hadith by Abu Saeed Al-Khudri that the Prophet, peace be upon him, said: 'If you heard the call say like what the Muezzin is saying.' In another Hadith reported by Jaber that the Prophet said 'He deserves my help on the day of judgment who said when hearing Azan: O' Allah, the Lord of this perfect call and imminent prayer, please award Mohammad the help, nobility, and the desired status you promised him.'

Imam Abdul Razaq narrated in his Musanaf that Ibn Juraig said: 'I was told that people used to listen to Azan like they would listen to recitation of Quran. They would repeat after the Muezzin. If he said: come to prayer, they will say: with the help and power of Allah. If he said: come to the good deed, they will say: with the will of Allah.

### *4.2 TALK IN A SUITABLE TONE*

If you speak to a guest or any other person, whether in a gathering or alone, make sure that your voice is pleasant, with a low, audible tone. Raising your voice is contrary to proper manners and indicates a lack of respect for the person to whom you are talking. This manner should be maintained with friends, peers, acquaintances, strangers, the young and the old. It is more important to adhere to this with one's parents or someone of their status, or with people for whom you have great respect. If appropriate, smile while talking to others. This will make them more receptive to what you have to say, and may dispel the impression that practicing Muslims are stern and humorless.

The Quran tells us that the advice of Luqman the Wise to his son was, '...and lower your voice,' directing him to speak in a gentle manner, for speaking loudly is detested and ugly. Verses two and three of Surat Al-Hujurat read: 'Oh you who believe! Raise not your voices, above the voice of the Prophet, nor speak aloud to him as you speak aloud to one another, lest your deeds become vain and you perceive not. Those that lower their voices in the presence of Allah's apostle, Allah has tested their hearts for piety, for them there is forgiveness and a great reward.'

Imam Al-Bukhari in his Sahih reported that 'Abdullah bin Al-Zubair said that after the revelation of this verse, whenever Omar bin Al-Khattab wanted to speak to the Prophet (PBUH), he would talk as if whispering. The Prophet would hardly hear him and he would inquire about some of what Omar said, since he did not hear him well.

Your talk should be clear, concise and to the point. Do not talk and talk and talk. Bukhari and Muslim reported that Anas said 'The Prophet's talk was precise clear, and succinct without undue elaboration.' Al-Hafiz Al-Zahabi wrote in his biography of Imam Ibn Sireen, the great scholar and eminent follower of the companions, that: 'Whenever he was in his mother's presence, he would talk in such a low voice that you would think that he was ill.' In his biography of Abdullah bin Awn Al-Basri, a student of Imam Ibn Sireen and one of the famous scholars Al-Hafiz Al-Zahabi, noted: 'One time his mother called him and because he responded with a voice louder than hers, he was fearful and repentant and he freed two slaves.'

'Asim bin Bahdelah Al-Koofi, the reciterof the Quran, said: 'I visited Omar bin 'Abdul Aziz, and a man spoke loudly, and Omar replied: 'Stop it. You need not talk loudly. Talk loud enough to make your listeners hear.'

### *4.3 THE ART OF LISTENING*

If a person started telling you or your group something that you know very well, you should pretend as if you do not know it. Do not rush to reveal your knowledge or to interfere with the speech. Instead, show your attention and concentration. The honourable follower Imam 'Ata ibn Abi Rabah said: 'A young man would tell me something that I may have heard before he was born. Nevertheless, I listen to him as if I have never heard it before.'

Khalid bin Safwan Al-Tamimi, who was with the two caliphs Omar bin Abdul Aziz; and Hisham bin Abdul Malik, said: 'If a person tells you something you have heard before, or news that you already learned, do not interrupt him or her to exhibit your knowledge to those present. This is a rude and an ill manner.' The honourable Imam 'Abdullah bin Wahab Al-Qurashi Al-Masri, a companion of Imam Malik, Al-Laith bin Sa'd and Al-Thawri, said: 'Sometimes a person would tell me a story that I have heard before his parents had wed. Yet I listen as if I have never heard it before.' Ibrahim bin Al-Junaid said: 'A wise man said to his son: 'learn the art of listening as you learn the art of speaking. Listening well means maintaining eye contact, allowing the speaker to finish the speech, and restraining yourself from interrupting his speech.'

Al-Hafiz Al-Khatib Al-Baghdadi said in a poem:

A talk never interrupt
Though you know it in and out

### *4.4 DISCUSSIONS AND DEBATES*

If you have trouble understanding some of what has been said in a meeting, restrain yourself until the speaker finishes. Gently, politely, and with proper introduction, ask for clarification. Do not interrupt a person's talk. This is contrary to the proper manner of listening, and stirs up contempt. However, this is not the rule if the meeting is for study and learning. In such a case, asking questions and initiating a discussion is desirable if conducted respectfully and tactfully and only after the speaker finishes. Caliph Al-Ma^mon said, 'Discussion entrenches knowledge more than mere following.'

Al-Haitham bin Adi, a known scholar, and historian, and one of the entourage of the four Caliphs Abi Jafer Al-Mansour, Al-Mahdi, Al-Hadi, and Al-Rasheed, said: 'The men of wisdom said it is an ill manner to overwhelm someone while speaking and to interrupt them before they end their speech.'

If a colleague did not understand a matter and asked a scholar or an elder to explain, you should listen to what is being said. From the repeated explanation you may gain additional benefits to what you already know. Never utter any word belittling your colleague, nor should your face betray any such emotion.

When an elder or a scholar speaks, you should listen attentively to them. Never busy yourself with a talk or discussion with other colleagues. Do not let your mind wander somewhere else. Keep it focused on what is being said. If you did not understand something that was said, wait until the talk is finished. Then and only then, ask the speaker, with respect and politeness, to explain it. Never raise your voice with the question, or be blunt to draw attention to yourself. Never interrupt a speaker.

Never rush to answer if you are not very confident of your answer. Never argue about something you do not know. Never argue for the sake of argument. Never show arrogance with your counterparts especially if they hold a different opinion. Do not switch the argument to belittle your opponent's views. If their mistaken understanding became evident, do not rebuke or scold them. Be modest and kind. A poet said,

Who could get me a person
When I offend him, his answer will reflect calmness
Who would listen intently to what I have to say
When he knows it better than I.

### *4.5 SWEARING BY ALLAH*

To confirm a statement, many resort to swearing by the name of Allah (SWT) or one of His attribute. This is a bad habit that should be resisted. The name of Allah should not be used

so lightly, and to swear by it is a very serious matter. Allah (SWT) in Sura Al-Nahil says 'And do not take your oath to practice deception between yourselves, with the result that someone's foot may slip after it was firmly planted' Always remember the hadith of the Prophet reported by Bukhari and Muslim ' Whoever believe in Allah and the Last Day should say something good or remain silent.'

### *4.6 ANSWERING A QUESTION*

If a colleague was asked about something that you know, do not rush to answer. Instead, you ought not to say anything until you are asked. This is a better manner, and a nobler attitude. It generates interest in what you say, while enhancing your respect.

The honourable follower Mujahid Ibn Jabr recalled that Luqman the Wise said to his son: 'If another person was asked a question, never hasten to give the answer, as if you are going to gain booty or to win a precious prize. By doing so, you will belittle the one who was asked and will offend the inquirer and you will bring the attention of the obnoxious people to your stupidity and ill-manner.'

Sheikh Ibn Batta, a Hanbali scholar, said: 'I was with Abu 'Omar Al-Zahid Mohammed ibn 'Abdul Wahed Al-Baghdadi - the Imam and linguist known also as Ghulam Th'alab. He was asked about an issue. I rushed and answered the inquirer. He turned toward me and asked: 'Do you recognize an officious character?' He suggested that I was a nosy person and made me feel very embarrassed.'

# SOCIAL MANNERS

### *5.1 RESPECT AND FAVOUR THE ELDERLY*

Recognize the status of the elderly and give them due respect. When walking with them, walk slightly behind, to their right. Let them enter and exit first. If you meet them, greet them properly and respectfully. If you discuss something with them, let them speak first, and listen to them attentively and graciously. If the conversation involves debate, you should remain polite, calm, and kind-hearted and you should lower your voice. Never forget to remain respectful.

Let me review with you some of the Prophet's sayings and traditions that uphold these polite manners. Imam Bukhari and Muslim 1 reported that Abdullah bin Sahl made a trip with Mahisa bin Masoud in Zayed to Khaibar. When they were to about to return, Mahisa found Abdullah had been murdered. He went to the Prophet with his older brother, Howaisa and the victim's brother, Abdul Rahman bin Sahl. Mahisa who witnessed the incident started to talk, but the Prophet said, 'the elder, the elder.' At that, Howaisa spoke and then Mahisa

Another story emphasizes this behaviour further. When he was young, Abdullah bin Omar was at a gathering of the Prophet and his senior companions like Abu Bakr and his father. The Prophet asked his companions, 'Tell what is the tree that does not shed its leaves and which is like the Muslim.' The companions started suggesting names of desert trees. Abdullah bin Omar thought it was the date-palm. Since he was the youngest, and seeing Abu Bakr and Omar silent, he shied away and said nothing. The Prophet told his companions: 'It is the palm tree'. Later, Abdullah told his father that he knew the right answer but shied away. Omar said to his son 'For you to have said it right then, would have been worth a lot to me.'

Imam Ahmad, Al-Hakim and Al-Tabarani reported that 'Ubada bin Al-Samit stated that the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) said: 'Whoever does not respect our elders is not one of us.' Another version reported: 'Whoever does not respect our elders, is not compassionate to our youth, and does not give our scholars due honour, he is not one of us.'

This should not be taken to belittle the youth or look down on them. Imam Bukhari reported that Ibn Abbas narrated that Omar was allowing him to attend his court with seniors who attended Badr. Some of them felt uneasy and asked, 'Why are you permitting him to attend when he is as young as our children?' Omar replied, 'He is [knowledgeable] as you well know.' Another version elaborates that Omar asked the seniors to explain Sura Al-Fatiha and only Abdullah in Abbas explained it correctly. Ibn Abbas said, 'I thought he asked the question just to demonstrate my knowledge to them.'

### *5.2 THE ELDERLY ARE TO LEAD PRAYERS*

The Messenger of Allah (PBUH) taught the youth the manners of companionship and the custom of giving precedence to elders. Al-Bukhari and Muslim reported that the honoured

companion Malik bin Al-Hwaireth (RA) said: 'I was with a youth group that visited the Messenger of Allah in Madina for twenty nights. The Messenger of Allah was very kind and compassionate. He sensed that we might have missed our families back home and he asked us about whom we had left behind. When we informed him, he said: 'Go back to your families, live with them, teach them Islam and tell them of the good deeds. At the times of prayer, let one of you call the Azan, and have your eldest lead the prayer.' '

The Prophet (PBUH) specified in this particular case that the eldest should lead the prayers since they were equal in their knowledge and learning. Being older in such a case merits leading the prayers. If a person is more knowledgeable, then he should lead the prayer since knowledge is an honor higher than age as could be seen in the Hadiths on this subject.

If the prayers were offered at a house, the host is entitled to lead it. Out of respect, he may request a person who is more knowledgeable, older or more prominent. If the guest declines, the host should not hesitate to lead the prayers. Imam Ahmad reported in his Musnad that Abdullah ibn Masoud visited Abu Musa Al-Ashari. When it was time to pray, Abu Musa asked Ibn Masoud, 'Please lead the prayers since you are older and have more knowledge.' Ibn Masoud said, ' No, you lead the prayer. This is your house and praying area. You should lead the prayer.' Abu Musa did lead the prayer then.

### *5.3 WALKING WITH THE ELDERLY*

To illustrate this point, I will cite jurist 'Ali bin Mubarak Al-Karkhi ( -487H), who studied under Imam, Abi Y'ala Al-Hanbali, himself a jurist and judge and the chief Shaikh of the Hanbali School of Law: 'One day, Judge Abu 'Yala said to me, while walking with him: 'If you walked with someone you honour, where would you walk?' I said: 'I do not know.' He said, 'Walk to his right. Place him at the position of Imam in the prayer. Leave his left side clear in case he needs to spit or to get rid of dirt.'

An interesting story in this regard happened among three Muslim scholars. They were Judge Ahmad bin Omar bin Suriah (249-306 A.H.), Faqih Mohammad bin Dawood Al-Zaheri (255 - 297 A.H. ), and Linguist Naftawih (244-323 A.H.). They were walking along together when they came to a very narrow passageway, and each wanted the other to go ahead. Ibn Suraih said, 'A narrow street brings ill manners.' Ibn Dawood responded, 'Though it points out status.' Naftawih said, 'When friendship prevails, formalities disappear.'

The story does not tell who went ahead of the others, but it is likely that it was Ahmad bin Suriah since he was a judge and a prominent Imam at the time and ranked above his two companions. He may have said 'A narrow street rings ill manners' apologizing out of politeness for going ahead. He could not have said it if any of the two moved ahead since that would have been impolite. There is a possibility that Naftawih went ahead since his words could be an apology for doing that since he is the least ranked. It is just wonderful to see such perfect behaviour and nice apologies.

### *5.4 THE ELDERLY ARE TO BE SERVED FIRST*

Give precedence to the elderly or to dignitaries, ahead of anyone else. After that, you may proceed with those on their right if you want to follow the practice of the Prophet (PBUH). The evidence supporting this manner in addition to the two Hadiths mentioned above, is illustrated in many Hadiths, some of which are cited below:

Imam Muslim reported in his Sahih in the Chapter on the Manners and Rules of Eating and Drinking, that Huzaifa bin Al-Yaman (RA) said: 'Whenever we were invited to a meal with the Messenger of Allah (PBUH), we would not reach the food with our hands before he reached for it.'

To emphasize the importance of these manners, Imam Al-Nawawi, in his book Riyad Al-Salihîn, cited a large collection of Hadith and devoted a whole chapter to the subject of 'Respecting Scholars, the Elderly and the Dignitaries. Giving them Precedence and the Best Seat. Acknowledging their Preeminence.' In the following paragraphs, I will reiterate some of these.

Allah said in the Quran: 'Are those equal, those who know and those who do not know? It is those who possess understanding that receive admonition.'

Imam Muslim reported that 'Uqba bin 'Amr Al-Badri Al-Ansari (RA) stated that the Prophet (PBUH) said: 'Those who are best at reciting the Quran should lead a group's prayer. If they are equal, then those most versed in the Sunna should lead; if they are equal, then a person who migrated first [from Makka to Madina] should lead; if they had migrated at the same time, then an elder should lead.'

Imam Muslim reported that Ibn Mas'od said that the Prophet (PBUH) said: 'Let your wise and mature pray immediately behind me, then those who trail behind them, and then those who trail behind them.'

Imam Al-Bukhari reported that Jabir bin Abdullah (RA) said: 'After the battle of Uhud, the Prophet (PBUH) buried two martyrs in one grave. He asked, 'which one memorized more of the Quran?' Upon being told which it was, he laid him first facing Qibla.'

In addition, Muslim reported that Abduallah bin Omar (RA) stated that the Prophet (PBUH) said: 'I dreamt I was brushing my teeth with Sewak when two men approached me. I handed the Sewak to the younger but was instructed to hand it to the older. Accordingly, I handed it to the older.'

Imam Abu Dawood reported as a fair Hadith that Abu Müsa Al-Ash'ari (RA) stated that the Prophet (PBUH) said: 'Part of paying homage to Allah is to respect an elder whose hair has turned gray, or a [regular] reader of the Quran, or a just ruler.'

This desired behaviour towards elders is so important that the Prophet made it a part of respecting and venerating Allah. To ignore it is a gross misbehaviour. At its forefront comes respect and reverence of the just ruler. A revered poet enumerated a group of rules and

stipulated that whoever broke these rules should be slapped on the neck. The eight rules are:

*Disrespecting a grand ruler*
*Entering a house without being invited to do so.*
*Giving orders/directions at another's house.*
*Taking an undeserved seat of honour.*
*Insisting on discussing a topic with others.*
*Interrupting two others.*
*Asking charity from a person of low character.*
*Seeking a favour from an enemy.*

Abu Dawood and Al-Hakim reported as an authentic Hadith that Maimün bin Abi Shabîb recounted that a beggar stopped the Prophet's wife Aisha (RA) and she gave him a piece of dry bread. At another time, a properly-dressed, well-groomed man asked her for food. She let him sit and offered him a meal. When asked about that, she replied that the Prophet (PBUH) said: 'Treat people according to their status.'

Imam Al-Nawawi concluded this chapter by citing a Hadith as reported by Al-Bukhari and Muslim in which Samura bin Jundub (RA) said: 'Though I was a young child at the time of the Prophet, I used to listen to what he said and memorize it. Nothing prevents me from narrating my knowledge except the presence of men older than me.'

In conclusion, the Sunnah is to start according to the following order of merits: age, knowledge, social status, lineage, veterans of Jihad, generosity or similar virtues. Further, the Sunnah of hospitality, is to start with the most prominent, then to move to those on the right in order to harmonize the custom of starting on the right with the custom of starting with people of virtue.

Some people who misunderstand the real meaning of some texts of the Sunnah claim that the Sunnah is to start with those on your right whoever they are. They base this on Hadiths that stress starting from the right. But this is only true when the group is in all ways equal in character, status or age. However, if one of them is distinguished with a merit such as old age, then the Sunnah is to start with this person.

In his book Al-Bayan wa Tahsîl Imam Ibn Rushd said: 'As a rule, if the status of those present is equal, one should start on the right, as with every desirable act. However, if a scholar, an honourable person or an elder is present, the Sunnah is to start with such a person and then move to his or her right in a counter clockwise fashion. The Messenger of Allah was offered milk mixed with water while a Bedouin was sitting on his right, and to his left, was sitting Abu Bakr. The Prophet drank some and handed it over to the Bedouin saying, 'From the right, then to the right.'

Do not proceed to the left in an anti-clockwise fashion, even if the person to the left is of a higher status, unless those on the right agree to pass their turn. The Messenger (PBUH) was sitting with elders on his left and a young man on his right. He was brought a drink. After drinking, he asked the young man: 'Would you give me the permission to pass it to those?

The boy answered: 'By Allah no. I would not favour anyone with my share of your drink.' The Prophet willingly put the drink in the child hand indicating that it is his right.

The Indian scholar, Al-Mubarkfuri, in his treatise on explaining Jami` Al-Tirmizi elaborated on this. When commenting on the Hadith, 'the server should be the last one to drink,' Al-Mubarkfuri said, 'This indicates that the server should delay his drink until all the guests are served. The same applies when fruits are being served. The most notable should be served first, and then those of the right until everyone is served.'

Al-Minawi in his explanation of Sharh Al-Shamail commented on the previous Hadith of Ibn Abbas: 'This implies that the Sunna is to continue serving drinks and food with those on the right of the most noble person even if that person happened to be less important than the person on the left.'

A Hadith in Sahih Muslim reinforces this rule of serving the elder or the most noble first, and then those on his right. Abdullah bin Bosur said, 'The Prophet visited my father and we served him with food made of dates and butter. Then he was brought dates, and he ate it and threw the pit using his middle and forefingers. Then he was brought a drink from which he drank and passed it to his right.'

The words 'he was brought a drink' clearly indicates that he was served first before those on his right since he was the noblest person present, and that then he passed it to those on his right. It indicates that they started with the Prophet out of respect and not because he asked for a drink. The preceding words 'he was brought dates' reinforces this understanding. It is very unlikely that the Prophet, while a guest, will ask his host for food and then for drink. It could be argued that this is a possibility. Indeed, it is a hypothetical possibility that lacks evidence or probability.

An important aspect of proper manners is that some people extend help and hospitality to strangers out of faith and pure humanity. If it becomes known that the person needing help has additional virtues such as being a scholar or notable person, they will go an extra step in their generosity and providing help. This is undoubtedly evidence of right instinct and faith which motivated such gestures.

Therefore, the general rule is to start from the right if those present are equal in merit. However, if there is a person who is well-known for a respectable trait, then start with that person.

If we were to follow the alleged rule that hosts ought to start with the person who happened to be on their right, then we could start with a young child, a servant, a driver, or a guard, at the expense of more prominent guests such as a dignitary, a revered scholar, a notable, a parent, a grandparent, or an uncle. Would it be acceptable by the Shari'a and its refined manners to forsake honouring and starting with persons of character, in favour of starting with a child, a servant, a driver and then proceed to persons of higher status? Also, it is possible that the ten persons or more are sitting on the right side before the most honourable person. To reach them at the end does not befit their status and may offend them. Islamic manners definitely do not accept this irregular conduct.

However, if someone asks for a drink, they have the right to the request before anybody else regardless of age or status, and the round should proceed with those on their right. If this person notices someone older or of higher status showing desire for the drink, he, or she may willingly give up his, or her right in favour of that person. When preferring others to yourself, you have practiced the Islamic manner of unselfishness, and you will achieve great virtue, and honour and gain great rewards.

To respect, obey and give precedence to the elderly is an old and established Arab custom. Here I would like to quote in full the advice of Qais bin Asem AL-Tamimi, a great companion. On his death bed, Qais advised his children to make their elders/seniors their leaders from whom they will also receive valuable advice and wisdom all revolving around Islamic behaviour.

Qais bin Asem Al-Minqeri Al-Tamimi was one of the leaders of Tamim. Famous for his eloquent speeches, the Prophet gave him the title 'Master of the desert dwellers.' He was a wise and mild-mannered person. On the 9th year of Al-Hijra, he came to visit the Prophet in Medina with a delegation of his tribe Bani Tamim. When the Prophet saw him he said 'This is the master of the desert dwellers.' He spent his last years in Basra where he died in the 20th year of Al-Hijra.

He was very patient and lenient. Ahnaf bin Qais, a famous Arab sage, was asked, 'Who taught you patience and leniency?' He answered, 'Qais bin Asem Al-Minqeri. Once I saw him sitting in his courtyard talking to his guests and his tribe. A man tied-up in ropes and a deadbody were brought to him. He was told, 'This is your nephew. He killed your son.' Qais bin Asem remained calm and continued his conversation until he was finished. Then turning to his nephew, he said to him: 'You have done the worst. You have sinned toward your Lord, you harmed your relative, and murdered your cousin. You killed yourself and weakened your tribe.' He called another son and said to him, 'My son, go to your cousin and untie him, go to your brother and bury him, and go to his mother and give her a hundred camels to compensate her for the loss of her son.'

Al-Hasan Al-Basri who met him and studied at his hand said that when Qais bin Asem was dying, he called his thirty-three children, and advised them as follows:

*'Oh my sons, fear Allah and remember what I will say, for no one will give you more sincere advice. When I die, make your seniors your leaders. Do not make your juniors your leaders for if you promote your seniors you will maintain your father's memory. Do not make your juniors your leaders for if you do so people will not only disrespect your seniors, but will look down at you. Do not wail on my death for I heard the Prophet forbidding wailing. Look after your wealth for it enlightens the generous and obviates the need to be mean. Do not beg people for that is the worst of wealth. Avoid bad traits which may please you once, but displease you many times."*

Qais then called for his quiver, and asked his eldest son, Ali, to take out an arrow. He then asked him to break it which he did. He then asked him to break two arrows and this he did. He then asked his son to bundle thirty arrows with a tie and break them all, but his son

could not. He said, 'My sons, you will be strong if united and weak if separated.' Then he composed the following poem:

Glory is what the truthful father built and which was maintained by the children.
Glory, bravery and leniency are best adorned with chastity and generosity
Thirty you are, my sons, in face of calamities and trouble
You are like thirty arrows bundled in a strong tie
It will not be broken, but once separated will be easily broken
Your elders, your best mannered, should be your leaders
Your young should be protected and nurtured until your youngest matures.

### *5.5 MANNERS WITH PARENTS*

Observe complete respect and reverence to your father and mother, for they are the most worthy of your consideration. Al-Bukhari and Muslim reported that a man asked the Prophet (PBUH): Oh Messenger of Allah, who is the most worthy of my best conduct?' He answered: 'Your mother! Your mother! Your mother! Then your father, then the next, and the next.'

Al-Bukhari in Al-Adab Al-Mufrad and Abdul Razzaq in his Musanaf (the wording is his) reported that Hisham bin 'Urwa recounted that his father told him that Abu Hurairah (RA) saw a man walking ahead of another. He asked him: 'How is this man related to you?' 'He is my Father,' the man answered. Abu Hurairah told him: 'Do not walk ahead of him, do not sit until he sits, and do not call him by his name.'

According to Ibn Wahab, a student of Imam Malik bin Anas named Imam 'Abdul Rahman bin Al-Qasim Al-'Utaqi Al-Masri (132-191 AH), said: 'While Imam Malik was reading Al-Muwata^ to me he suddenly stood up for a long while, then he sat again. He was asked why, and he answered: 'My mother came down asking me something. Since she was standing I stood up respectfully, when she went, I sat back down.'

The revered follower Tawoos bin Kisan said: 'It is part of the Sunnah to respect four persons: a scholar, an elder, a leader, and a father. It is considered rude that a man call his father by his name.' At the end of his book of Malkite Fiqh Al-Kafi, Imam Bin 'Abdul Al-Barr said:

*'Kindness to the parents is an obligatory, duty and by the grace of Allah it is an easy matter. Kindness means to be humble with them, to speak to them nicely, to look at them with love and respect, to speak in a mild tone that does not surpass theirs unless they are hard of hearing, to give them complete access to your own wealth, and to offer them the best of your food and drink.*

Children should not walk ahead of their parents, nor speak ahead of them in matters that they know are their father's. Children should wholeheartedly avoid upsetting their parents and should seek their pleasure as much as possible. Making your parent's life enjoyable is one of the most virtuous acts.

Children must hasten to respond to their parents' call. If a child is praying voluntarily, he/she should shorten the prayer and respond promptly. Children should express only good words.

In return, it is the parents' duty to make it easier for their children to be kind to them by being kind and generous to their children, but without Allah's help people cannot become obedient, nor can they perform his commands.'

You may encounter various difficulties while serving your mother and father, but do not forget that their rights are multiples of these difficulties. For this Aallah said in the Qur'an 'Your Lord has decreed that you worship none but Him, and that you be kind to the parents. Whether one or both of them attain old age in the life, say not a word of contempt, nor repel them but address them in terms of honour. And, out of kindness lower to them the wing of humility, and say: 'My Lord bestow mercy on them as they cherished me in childhood.'' The Prophet (PBUH) said, 'No child will compensate a parent unless he finds him or her a slave and he frees them.'

Keep in mind that everyone likes to be the best in status, prestige and popularity, and hates to see someone better than himself or herself. Only your parents would wish that you become better than what they are. How should you treat those who prefer you to themselves and wish you better.

### *5.6 Tell Your Family your Whereabouts*

If you leave home to go to a place other than your usual work, it is advisable to inform your family where you are going. This information is very useful to have their mind at ease knowing where you are. The great follower, Qatada bin Di'ama Al-Sadousi disapproved of someone going somewhere without telling their family their whereabouts. Imam Ahmad reported that Qatada narrated that he went with Abo Ma'shar to visit Al-Sha'bi. His family said he was not home. Qatada asked, 'Where did he go?' His family said, 'We do not know.' Qatada then said, 'You mean he does not tell you where he goes?' They said, 'Yes.' Telling your family where you are lessens their worries besides putting you and them at ease if you were late since they know where you are.

### *5.7 RESPECT THE POOR*

If you come across a poor person at a gathering or you were visited by a poor person at home or at work, do not look down upon him or her because you consider them poor. Poverty is not a defect or a fault to be ashamed of, while lack of kindness and generosity is.

Treat poor companions or guests with honour and respect. Be pleasant while talking to them, using the best of language. Again, poverty is not a vice. Many of the poor are more honourable than the wealthy, and many who are penniless are preferred to the rich.

### 5.8 DEALING WITH NON-MUSLIMS

If your neighbours happen to be non-Muslim you must not forget Islamic manners in dealing with neighbours. The recommendation of Islam for good relationship with neighbours is for Muslims and non-Muslims alike.

You as a Muslim should demonstrate to all people the goodness of Islam with your gentle manners and kind behaviour. Bukhary and Muslim reported the Hadith of Anas 'No one is a believer if he do not like for his brother what he likes for himself.' The report of Muslim said ' till he loves for his brother, or neighbour, as he likes for himself'. The scholars said that the word 'brother' here is said in the most common context and thus the means brothers in humanity including Muslims and non-Muslims. A Muslim would love for his non-Muslim brother, as he loves for himself, to become a Muslim to enjoy the benefits of Islam and the rewards of Allah.

A Muslim would do very well when he prays for the guidance of his non-Muslim brothers as he likes for his Muslim brothers to remain Muslim and to continue their devotion and adherence to Islam. In Sura Al-Mumtahana, Allah said 'Allah forbid you not, with regard to those who did not fight you for your faith nor drive you out of your homes, to deal kindly and justly with them: For Allah loves those who are just. Allah only forbids you with regard to those who fought you for your faith and drove you out of your homes and support others in driving you out, for turning to them for friendship and alliance. Those of you who do that are doing wrong.'

There is nothing to prevent us from being kind, generous and helpful to non-Muslims as long as they do not demonstrate verbal or tangible animosity towards Islam. Hopefully, this will remove barriers to introduce them to join Islam and Muslims.

This positive attitude does not mean going along with non-Muslims and abandoning our distinct personality. It means we must fair, kind and moderate with ourselves and our neighbours in all matters. In interpreting this, Imam Qortubi said: 'This constitute a consent by Allah to maintain amicable relationship with those who did not antagonize Muslim or attack them. Imam Qortubi cited the opinion of Abdul Rahman bin Zayed who said that this rule was in the beginning of Islam when fighting was not required, but later it was annulled. Imam Qortubi also cited Qatada who said this verse had been annulled by another verse in Sura Al-Tawba (9:5) 'But when the forbidden months are past, then fight and the slay the pagans wherever you find them..'

After citing these two opinions and other similar ones, Imam Qortubi concluded by saying: The majority of interpreter are said that it is a valid verse that has not been annulled. They cited the story reported by Bukhary and Muslim of Asma' bint Abi Bakr when she asked the Prophet if could entertain and be kind to her non-Muslim mother who visited her in Madina and the Prophet said 'Yes.'

It was said that this verse was revealed in this incident. Al-Mauardi and Abo Dawood reported that Amer bin Abdullah bin Al-Zubair narrated that his father told him that before Islam Abu Bakr divorced his wife Qutaila who was the mother of Asma. When the truce was

held between the Prophet and the pagans of Quraish, the mother visited her daughter in Madina and brought her an ear-ring and other gifts. Asma was reluctant to accept the gifts before asking the Prophet. In answer to her question Allah revealed this verse. When Allah says 'to deal kindly and justly with them' Al-Faraa said that Allah meant those who did not fight you alluding to Khoza tribe who made an agreement with Muslims not to fight them or assist those fighting them. Allah ordered Muslims to be kind and faithful to them as per the terms of the agreement.

Al-Kadi Abu Bakr ibn Al-Arabi said that the expression of qist is not derived from justice but from share, meaning you may give them a portion of your money to maintain cordial relationship. For justice is a duty toward all whether they were friends or foes. Imam Bukhari and Imam Ahmad reported that Anas bin Malik that a Jewish boy used to serve the Prophet, preparing his ablution and to hand him his shoes. The boy became ill. The Prophet went to visit the boy and he was gravely ill with his father sitting at his head. The Prophet invited him to Islam by telling him to say: There is no God but Allah. The boy looked at his father who kept silent. The Prophet repeated his request and the boy looked at his father again who told him 'Obey Abo Al-Kasim.' The boy, just before dying, said 'I bear witness that no God but Allah and that you are His Messenger.' The Prophet said 'Thank Allah for enabling me to save him.'

Hafiz Ibn Hajar said that this Hadith indicates many rules; that Muslims are allowed to employ non-Muslims, to visit them while sick. It also directs us to maintain cordiality. It allows the employment of the youth, to offer them Islam if they were mature to make a choice, and to accept their conversion if they embraced Islam.

Hafiz Al-Badr Al-Aini said this Hadith indicted the consent to visit ill non-Muslims especially if they were neighbours since it demonstrated the kindness of Islam and may encourage them to embrace it. The Hadith also allows the employment of non-Muslims and the coridality to them. It also consent employing the youth.

You may console non-Muslims on mourning using appropriate expressions. Imam Al-Kadi Abo Yosuf said, in the end of his book Al-Kharaj, that he asked Abo Hanifa about how to console a Jew or a Christian who lost a child or relative. Abo Hanifa said to say 'Allah decreed death for all His creations. We ask Allah to make death the best fate to wait for. We all belong to Allah and to Him we all shall return. Be patient and endure this calamity.

Abo Yosuf said we learned that a Christian who used to attend the lectures of Al-Hasan Al-Basri died. Al-Hasan went to console his brother. He said: May Allah reward you for this calamity as He reward your fellows. May Allah bless our death and make it the best fate to wait for. Be patient against the misfortunes. You may say these kind words and remind them of death as the inescapable fate with which we can do nothing about but acceptance and patience.

Imam Ibn A'bdin in his book Rad Al-Muhtar that the Shaf'ee said: You may console Muslims when at the death of a non-Muslim relative. On such occasion you may say: May Allah increase your rewards and patience. You may console non-Muslims on the loss of a Muslim

relative. On such occasions you may say: May Allah forgive your deceased and give best condolence.

# MANNERS OF EATING

### *6.1 THE IMPORTANCE OF EATING MANNERS*

Eating manners are very important since it is repeated many times every day. It must be done properly whether eating alone, with family, or with friends. To avoid pretenses, you should train yourself in proper eating manners, whether alone or with your family. It will then become a natural part of your behaviour, and you will be at ease at the table.

### *6.2 THE MANNERS OF EATING*

There are certain table manners that are indispensable. Say 'Bismillah' when starting, to thank Allah and say 'Alhamdulilah' when finished. Eat what is in front of you. Eat using your right hand. A hypocrite was eating with his left hand when the Prophet saw him and advised him to eat with his right. The man falsely said 'But I cannot' The Prophet said 'May it be so' and the hypocrite was not able to lift his right hand again.

The companions of the Prophet followed his example in stressing the use of the right hand while eating. Omar was Khalifa when he saw a man eating with his left hand and similarly advised him to eat with his right. The man answered 'My right is busy' Omar repeated his request and the man repeated his answer. Omar asked him 'What is it busy with?' The man answered that it had been severed in one of the battles. Omar blamed himself for neglecting such handicap and ordered the treasurer to provide the man with a servant to help him.

If eating with your hand, use three fingers with small bites, lifting it gently with ease to your mouth. Close your mouth while eating to avoid unnecessary noises. To eat on the floor is nearer to what the Prophet used to do. However, there is no problem to eat at a table. Imam Ghazali said, 'To eat at a table is to make eating easier and there is nothing against that.' Do not start eating ahead of the elders or the nobles. If you are the elder, do not commence eating before everyone is at the table.

It is preferred that eating should not be conducted in silence. It is good manners to talk during meals. Topics should be nice stories suitable for eating. At the end of the meal, if hands are to be washed, the elder or the noble should be asked to proceed first.

At the end of a meal, thank Allah as in the Hadith reported by Abo Dawood and Nasa'i in 'the deeds of day and night.' Thank Allah who fed us and provided us with drink. It is very appropriate to make a prayer for your hosts as it is reported by Muslim that Al-Migdad ibn Al-Aswad reported that the Prophet said, 'May Allah feed those who have fed us, and provide drinks to those who provided us with it.'

Do not express your disapproval or dislike of certain foods. Either eat it or pass it over quietly. Abu Huraira reported that 'the Prophet never expressed his dislike of a food. If he liked it he will eat it. If he disliked it, he will set aside.'

Do not put in your plate more than can eat. Leftovers could be thrown out, it shouldn't, and wasted. Put smaller portions twice rather than one large portion that you will not eat. The Prophet did not approve of leaving any food in a plate since as he said 'You don't know which portion is blessed'. Food is a blessing of Allah, to misuse it is contrary to Islam. Do not forget the poor and the needy who do not have the portion you are throwing away

### *6.3 THE MANNERS OF DRINKING*

Drinking manners are no less important. To start in the name of Allah is a must. Use your right hand to drink. Abo Dawood and Tirmizi related that Hafsa (RA) said 'the Prophet used his right hand for eating and drinking. He used his left for other things [such as personal hygiene].' Do not pour your drink down your throat in one gulp. Drink it in three sips. Ibn Abbas reported that the Prophet said 'Do not drink like a camel. Drink twice or thrice. Say the name of Allah before drinking. Thank Allah after finishing.

Do not exhale in your glass. This will irritate others and will smudge the glass or the cup. Ibn Abbas reported that the Prophet forbade exhaling in a glass or puffing into it.

Do not drink directly from the jug or the container. Beside being unhygienic behaviour, others may want to drink after you who could be irritated. Abo Huraira narrated that the Prophet forbade drinking directly from the mouth of the sheepskin or the flask.

### *6.4 AVOID GLUTTONY*

Modesty is the crown (hallmark) of the common people. Keep this crown on your head if invited to a feast or if you are presented with food or drink. Do not be gluttonous devouring food as if you have not eaten for a long time, or as if you have not seen such excellent food before. Do not sample every dish on the table. People, even generous hosts disapprove of greedy eaters. Be reasonable and moderate in enjoying the generosity of your hosts.

### *6.5 GOLD AND SILVER CUTLERY*

Do not eat using golden or silver plates or cutlery. This goes against the spirit of Islamic modesty. Pomposity is not an Islamic trait. Bukhari narrated that Huzaifa said the Prophet said 'Do not drink in golden or silver cups nor eat in such plates.' If you were a guest, simply ask your host to replace it with another one.

# WEDDINGS

### *7.1 WEDDINGS ARE PART OF THE PROPHET'S TRADITION*

If invited to a marriage ceremony or wedding celebration, you should accept the invitation unless it may include prohibited acts. Attending a wedding is part of the Sunnah, as Islam regards marriage as an act of worship and obedience to Allah. Islam endorses performing marriage contracts in the mosque. Muslim jurists stipulated that this is based on a Hadith reported by Al-Tirmidhi and Ibn Maja: 'Publicize the marriage, execute it at the mosques and celebrate it with drums.' Another Hadith reported by Imam Ahmad and Al-Hakim and others supports the first Hadith: 'Publicize Marriage.' It also supported by a third Hadith reported by Ahmad, Al-Tirmidhi, Al-Nasa'i and Ibn Maja: 'The difference between a legitimate (Halal) and an illegitimate (Haram) marriage is the presence of voices and drums.'

There is no dispute among Muslim scholars that in a wedding celebration, the Prophet (PBUH) allowed women to use drums. The most valid opinion among many scholars is that men can also use drums in order to publicize the marriage thus making it known near and far. The noble Islamic purpose of such publicity is to distinguish between an evil and illicit relationship and a pure and desirable marriage.

Attending a wedding is one of the rights of brotherhood among Muslims. It fulfills the requirement of publicity, reinforces the need to attest to the sanctity of the marriage, and it gives a chance to join your brethren as they complete the second half of Islam, and while you pray that they remain observant of the first half. Attending a wedding also honours the husband and wife by having their relatives and friends share in their happiness. It blesses them with guests that pray to Allah for their righteousness, success, affluence and prosperity.

### *7.2 THE MANNERS OF ATTENDING WEDDINGS*

If invited, attend the celebration as if you have answered an invitation to a blessed occasion, and a delightful and acclaimed celebration, as the Prophet proclaimed you should. Dress appropriately, for the Prophet's companions used to dress properly at weddings. When initiating or sharing in discussions, make sure your conversation fits the happy occasion and does not include depressing and distasteful subject matter that could spoil the occasion. Muslims should be wise and considerate.

It is recommended that you congratulate the bride and bridegroom, by reciting the Hadith narrated by Abu Dawood and Al-Tirmidhi, and authenticated by Ibn Maja and Al-Hakim, whereby the Prophet (PBUH) said: 'May Allah bless your side and bless your counterpart and may Allah tie your union with virtue.' Do not use the commonly used phrase 'With comfort and children,' because this was the phrase used by the people of ignorance (Jahilia). The Prophet (PBUH) prohibited such a saying, and Allah, with His blessing, replaced it by the prayer of his Prophet (PBUH). Al-Bukhari reported that 'Ayisha (RA) said: 'When the Prophet (PBUH) married me, my mother led me into the house where women of Ansar were celebrating. They congratulated me with reward, blessing, and 'best of luck' wishes.

Islam permits women to celebrate a wedding by singing tasteful songs, accompanied by a drum beat. Such poems and songs should not promote lust, lewd desire, or portray physical beauty. Instead, they should sing delightful and decent songs to express their happiness with the marriage. Al-Bukhari reported that 'Ayisha (RA) said: 'A bride was led to her Ansar husband. The Prophet (PBUH) said: O Ayisha, did you not have merriment? The Ansar love fun.' He was referring to the singing and beating of drums.

Al-Hafiz ibn Hajar reported in his book Fath Al-Bari that 'Ayisha recalled that the Prophet (PBUH) asked 'Why did you not send with her [the bride] a singer girl to sing with a drum beat? I said, 'What?' He answered:

We are visiting you, we are visiting you
If you greet us, we'll greet you.
For your gold, bright and red, brought the bride to your farm
And it is your wheat, brown and tanned, that made your virgins' charm

Songs sung at weddings must be similar and have wholesome and seemly meanings. Songs of lust, passion and immorality should be avoided.

# VISITING THE SICK

### *8.1 VISITING A PATIENT*

It is your duty to visit your Muslim brethren in time of illness. This will enhance and nourish the bond of Islam and the brotherhood among you. As a committed Muslim, do not undervalue the great reward from Allah. Imam Muslim reported that the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) said: 'A Muslim visiting ill brethren will continue to be in the Khurfa of paradise until he, or she comes back home. He was asked, 'What is the khurfa of Paradise?' He answered, 'This means the harvest of paradise.' Imam Ahmad and Ibn Hibban in his authentic book reported that the Messenger said: 'A visitor walking to visit a patient will be wading in the mercy of Allah. When the visitor sits with the patient they will be immersed in mercy until his, or her return.'

### *8.2 PRAYING FOR THE SICK*

It is very appropriate to say few prayers for the sick asking Allah (SWT) to bless them with recovery and help them through their sickness. Bukhari and Muslim reported that Aisha said 'If someone fell sick the Prophet would pass his right hand over them while saying the following prayer 'O the Lord of humans, take away the suffering, bring the recovery, no cure but your cure that leaves no ilness.' In another hadith reported by Bukhari, Ibn Abbas said that the Prophet when vising a sick person would say: 'Hold on, may Allah cleanse you.'

### *8.3 THE LENGTH OF THE VISIT*

Certain etiquette will make your visit to an ill person a refreshing and morale boosting one. Your duty is to ease his or her pains, and to make him or her more conscious of the rewards they will gain in return for their suffering and endurance.

Make your visit brief. Sick persons may not withstand such long visits. The length of the visit should be not longer than the time between the two speeches of Friday. In this respect, it was said that the visit should be long enough to convey your greeting and wishes (Salam), to ask the sick how he or she is doing, to pray for recovery and to leave immediately after saying good-bye.

If you visit a patient say your greeting
And immediately you should say, 'Good-bye'
The best visit is every third day The best stay is in the blink of an eye
Do not bother the patient with many questions
Two or three words will get you all along.

At the end of his book of Malkite Fiqh, Al-Kafi, Imam Ibn 'Abdul Al-Barr said: 'Whether you visit a healthy or an ill person, you ought to sit where you are told. Hosts know better how to ensure privacy in their home. Visiting an ill person is a confirmed Sunnah. The best visit is the shortest. The visitor sought not to sit too long with an ill person, unless they are close friends and the ill person enjoys their company.'

### *8.4 THE MANNERS OF VISITING A PATIENT*

The visitor ought to wear clean clothes with a fresh scent in order to make the patient feel better both spiritually and physically. At the same time, it is improper to wear fancy clothes that are more appropriate for parties and festivities. Wearing a strong perfume may annoy the sick.

Visitors ought to keep their conversation light and avoid gloomy talk that might exacerbate the patient's distress. Avoid conveying bad news such as a failing business, a death, or similar bad news. Also, visitors ought not to inquire about the details of illness unless the visitor is a specialized physician. Similarly, visitors should not recommend to a patient any food or medicine that might have helped them or someone else. Such recommendation might lead the ill person, out of ignorance or desperation, to try it, causing further complication or even death.

Do not criticize or object to the treatment by the physician in the presence of the ill person for it might cast doubt in the mind of the sick. If you are a specialized physician, you may want to discuss the case and its treatment privately with the doctor in charge.

### *8.5 How the Ill express their complaints*

It is recommended that when asked about our condition, a sick person should start by thanking Allah and then proceed to list his complaints. This is to avoid the appearance of complaining of Allah's will. This was the etiquette of the followers as reported by Al-Khatib Al-Baghdadi in his Tarikh Baghdad in the biography of Abdul Rahman Al-Tabib who was the physician of Imam Ahmad and Bishr Al-Hafi. Abdul Rahman said both Imam Ahmad and Bishr became sick and were treated at the same place. 'When I visited Bishr, I asked how he felt, and with thanks to Allah first, he then proceeded saying I have this pain or that complaint. When I visited Imam Ahmad and asked how he felt, he would say 'I feel all right.' One day I told him, 'your brother Bishr is also ill, but when I ask him of his conditions, he thanks Allah first, then tells me his condition. Imam Ahmad said, 'Please ask him from where did he get this.' I answered, 'His presence makes me reluctant to ask.' Imam Ahmad said, 'Tell him your brother, Abo Abdillah asks from where did you get this.' Abdul Rahman asked Bishr as told. Bishr said, 'Abo Abdillah wants everything with authority. I heard this from Azhar who heard it from ibn Aoun who heard it from ibn Sireen; 'If a person thanked Allah before complaining, it will not be a complaint but as if telling the acts of Allah. ' Abdul Rahman said, 'I
told this to Imam Ahmad. After that, if asked how he felt, he would start by thanking Allah, and then describing his complaints.'

The answer of Bishr indicates that when asked about their health, the sick preferably should praise Allah first then explain their complaints. By this approach, it is not considered complaining against the acts of Allah.

# CONDOLENCE

### *9.1 BREAKING UNPLEASANT NEWS*

If you have to break the undesired news of a tragic accident, or the death of a dear or close relative or friend, break the news in such a way as to lessen its impact and to make it as mild and gentle as possible. For example, in the case of a death, you may say: 'Recently, I learned that Mrs. X has been terribly sick, and her condition worsened. Today, I heard she has passed away. May the mercy of Allah be with her.'

Start by giving the name of the person in question. Do not break the news of a death by saying, 'Do you know who died today?' This unduly manner frightens the listeners and prompts them to expect the worst, namely that the death involves someone who is very close to them. Instead, mention the name of the dead person before breaking the tragic news of the death. This will soften the impact of the news, reducing the listener's apprehension, and making the news more bearable.

Convey the news of fire, drowning, or car accident, etc. in a similar fashion. Prepare the listener for the news in a way that minimizes its impact. Mention the name(s) of the affected person(s) in a kind way, not a shocking way. Some people have weak hearts and such bad news may cause them to faint and collapse.

If it is necessary to convey such news, choose the appropriate time. It should not take place at a meal, before going to sleep, or during an illness. Compassion and tactfulness are the best qualities you will need to handle such a situation.

### *9.2 EXPRESSING CONDOLENCES IS A COURTESY AND A DUTY*

Parting among loved ones is one rule of Allah in his creations. Al-Hafiz Al-Munziri reported a Hadith, 'Love whoever you will and you will part.' Along this same rule, poets said:

We are but guests with our families,
Staying for a while, and leaving them.
Wealth and families are but trusts.
Inevitably, one day trusts will be recalled.
The sons of this life will all part
To meet together again in the hereafter.

One wise poet listed eight stages we must all pass through. No one will be spared of these:

Happiness and sorrow; gathering and parting;
Difficulties and easiness; and illness and good health.

Another poet said

Make perseverance your friend, and leave painful sorrow
You are not alone
Everyone lost, or will lose a loved one.

If a relative or a close friend of one of your relatives or friends dies, hasten to offer your condolences. You owe your relatives, friends and Muslim brothers the moral obligation of alleviating their plight. If you can, you should attend the funeral and the burial at the cemetery. Aside from being a highly rewarding gesture of sympathy, it could be an effective and stern admonition, and a lesson reminding you of the inevitability of death.

While alive, your life had lessons, reminders and admonition
Today, your death gives me the most important lesson

Al-Bukhari and Muslim reported that the Prophet (PBUH) said: 'A Muslim owes his Muslim brethren five gestures: returning a greeting, visiting the ill, and attending their funeral...' Imam Ahmad
reported that the Prophet said: 'Visit the sick and follow the procession of funerals; you will remember the Hereafter.'

Condolences is to alleviate the sense of grieving that confront the family of the deceased. This is achieved by encouraging them to be composed while trusting in Allah's promise of great reward. Allah said in Surat Al-Baqarah 'And give glad tidings to those who patiently persevere; who say, when afflicted with a disaster, 'Truly! To Allah we belong and truly, to Him is our return.' They are those on whom descend blessings and receive the mercy of their Lord, and it they who are the guided ones.' Condolence is done by praying for the deceased to be helped and pardoned, since they will receive the benefit of such prayers. Condolence is a sincere expression of sympathy and to share the sorrow of these stressful moments. Ibn Maja and Baihaki reported, with a fair authority, a Hadith: 'A Muslim who consoles other Muslims suffering from a calamity will be awarded a dress of dignity by Allah on the day of Judgment.'

### *9.2 EXPRESSING CONDOLENCES AND SYMPATHY*

When offering condolences about a plight that befalls a relative, friend or acquaintance, it is kind to pray for the dead. Say a prayer similar to that reported by Muslim to have been articulated by Messenger (PBUH) to Umm Salamah (RA) at the death of her husband: 'O Allah, forgive Abi Salamah, elevate his status among the guided people, and look afterthe family that he left behind. O Lord of the universe, forgive us and him, comfort him in his grave, and lighten his stay.'

Your conversation with anguished persons should be aimed at mitigating their agony by mentioning the reward of patience, the transitory nature of life on earth, and that the Hereafter is everlasting life.

In this respect, it is desirable to reiterate certain verses of the Quran, the sayings of the Prophet (PBUH) or some of the well-spoken condolences of our ancestors. You may mention the saying of Allah SWT: 'But give glad tidings to those who patiently endure, who say, when

afflicted with calamity: To Allah we belong and to Him we return. They are those on whom [descend] blessings from their Lord, and mercy, and they are the ones that receive guidance.'4 Or you may quote another verse from the Quran: 'Every soul shall have a taste of death and only on the Day of Judgment shall you be paid your full recompense. Only those who are saved far from the fire and admitted to the Garden will have attained the object [of life], for the life of this world is but goods and chattels of deception.' And such are Allah's words: 'All that is on earth will perish. But Allah will abide [for ever], the face of your Lord, most gracious, and most generous.'

You may mention some of sayings of the Prophet (PBUH) reported by Muslim and others: 'Oh Allah, reward my calamity and replace my loss with a better one.' And like the saying of Prophet (PBUH) reported by Bukhari and Muslim: 'It is Allah's that takes and it is He that gives, and He prescribes a certain destiny for every matter.' Al-Bukhari and Muslim reported that when the Prophet (PBUH) mourned the death of his son Ibrahim he said: 'My eyes are tearful. My heart is full of anguish, but we will say only what pleases our Lord. O Ibrahim, your loss filled us with sorrow.' Also, it is very appropriate in this regard to use some of the traditional sayings of the Muslim forefathers. Omar bin Al-Khattab used to say: 'Everyday we are told that so and so has just died. One day it will be said, ‘Omar has died.' ' You may allude to the saying of the just Caliph Omar ibn Abdul Aziz (RA): 'A person who is not separated from Adam by a living father, is indeed deep-rooted in death.'

The honoured follower Al-Hasan Al-Basri said: 'Oh son of Adam, you are nothing but mere days. Whenever a day passes away: a part of you passes away.' He also said: 'Allah ordained that the ultimate resting place of believers will be paradise, no less.' His student Malik ibn Dinar said: 'The wedding of the one who fears Allah, is the Day of Judgment.' A poet said:

Passing the days we are content
Passing a day brings us near the end

Another poet said:

Offering condolences, we trust not living long
The manners of this religion we follow along
The consoled and the consoling may live today
Tomorrow though, they ‘ll vanish away.
A suitable poem in this regard:
We die and live every night and day
One day we will die and move away

Another poem describes how oblivious humans can be to death:

Life is but a ship afloat
We think it's still, but running is the boat

I have quoted all these appropriate mourning quotations because I have witnessed many inappropriate conversations and talks by people offering sympathy. Mourning hearts are

depressed with anguish and sorrow. Be sensitive and select a suitable topic for your conversation.

Attempt to lift the spirits of the bereaved family. The great scholar, Mansour bin Zazan said, 'Sorrow and sadness will increase rewards.' Al-Hassan Al-Basri pointed out that this painful state will gradually pass away, but our sins will remain with us forever. He said, 'Every sad anguish will diminish, except anguish over sins.' The great scholar, Ata bin Abi Muslim pointed out that life is full of challenges and events. 'A believer would not be happy for one complete day.'

### *9.4 Sending Flowers and Reading Quran during Funerals*

It should be noted that many people at the death of a dear person will bring flowers and wreaths and after proceeding with the funeral, will take the flowers and wreaths to the home of the deceased. They buy the best flowers and wreaths to show their deep sympathy and concern. To do this is forbidden - whether presenting it at the funeral, accompanying the funeral with it, or bringing it to the deceased's house. This is an imitation of non-Muslims, and is an evil innovation which should be strictly avoided. Those who do such a thing will have no reward from Allah. To the contrary, they will be questioned for such meaningless waste.

Another misguided innovation during funerals is that the car that carries the deceased will broadcast, through speakers, a recording of the Holy Qur'an as if announcing the passing away of the deceased. The funeral procession should be characterized by thoughtfulness, humbleness, remembrance, reflection, awareness of Allah, and prayers for mercy. No sad music or religious chant should accompany funerals. These two rules should be followed and spread around to make Muslims aware of the right way.

### *A Final Word*

This is a collection of Islamic manners that form the etiquette of our pious Muslim predecessors. I introduced it in a clear and understandable way so that you may practice it. The best place to follow these manners is at your house and the houses of your brothers. Do not overlook these etiquettes when dealing with your family and your Muslim brethren.

Your immediate family and friends are the most deserving of your good conduct and manners. In this regard, Bukhari and Muslim reported that a man asked the Prophet (PBUH): 'Oh, Prophet of Allah, who deserves my best behaviour? The Prophet answered: 'Your mother! Your mother! Your mother! Then your father, then the closer, and the closer among your relatives.'

Do not overlook these manners when interacting with the appropriate people, and act nicely and amicably with others. If you do not behave properly, you degrade yourself, abuse the duty that you are entrusted with, and abandon the guidance of the Messenger of Allah (PBUH). Rely on Allah to attain His pleasures and the manners of His religion, for it is He who protects the virtuous people.

May Allah protect you, your relatives and your beloved ones. May Allah help you obey His orders, remain obedient to Him, and follow the example of His Prophet. May Allah grant you His love, grace and His generosity. May Allah pray upon His Prophet and Messenger Muhammad, his family and his companions. All praise to Allah, the Lord of the universe. Ameen.

This was written in the hope of receiving your prayers.

**'Abdul Fattah Abu Ghuddah**